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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 63/141 of 10 March 2009, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to improve the international response to natural disasters and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. The report provides an overview of the occurrence of disasters associated with natural hazards and the humanitarian response to them and highlights emerging trends, their implications for humanitarian action and the key challenges that need to be addressed. It covers the period from 1 January 2008 to 31 May 2009.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 63/141. It provides an overview of the occurrence of disasters associated with natural hazards and the humanitarian response to them and highlights emerging trends, their implications for humanitarian action and key challenges. It concludes with a number of recommendations. The report covers the period from 1 January 2008 to 31 May 2009.

II. Overview of trends and emerging challenges[1]

2. During the calendar year 2008, the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters recorded 354 disasters associated with natural hazards, which were responsible for 235,264 deaths and affected approximately 214 million people. The number of disasters in 2008 was below the 2000-2007 average of 397 disasters per year. The number of deaths, however, was approximately three times higher than the 2000-2007 average, owing to two major events: Cyclone Nargis, which killed 138,366 people in Myanmar, and the Sichuan earthquake in China, which killed 87,476 people.

3. The number of recorded disasters has doubled from an average of 200 to 400 per year over the past 20 years. This trend can be partly attributed to better reporting, but it also reflects changes in the patterns of natural hazards, specifically climate-related hazards, and in human settlement and vulnerability.

4. Floods were the most common type of disaster recorded in 2008 (166 recorded events), followed by storms (112 recorded events) and earthquakes (23 events). Climate-related hazards caused 91 per cent of disasters in 2008, consistent with the trend of increasing climate-related disasters in recent years. On average, some 70 per cent of disasters are now climate-related, compared with 50 per cent two decades ago.

5. Asia was again the region most affected by disasters associated with natural hazards. Forty per cent of recorded disasters, 99 per cent of disaster-related deaths and 62 per cent of economic losses occurred in Asia. Nine of the ten countries with the most disaster-related deaths in 2008 were in Asia. China, Indonesia, the Philippines and the United States of America reported the largest number of natural disasters.

6. In 2008, disasters associated with natural hazards caused $190 billion in economic losses, more than double the 2000-2007 annual average and mainly attributable to the Sichuan earthquake in China ($85 billion) and Hurricane Ike in the United States ($30 billion). Despite high absolute financial losses in the United States and Europe, the relative economic impact of disasters was greatest in low- and middle-income countries.

[1] Aggregated data presented in section II relate to the calendar year 2008. Data and observations in subsequent sections relate to the reporting period 1 June 2008 to 31 May 2009. Details of disasters occurring between 1 January and 31 May 2008, including Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar and the Sichuan earthquake, are available in last year's report (A/63/277).

7. According to the *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction*, published in May 2009, by the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, global disaster risk is increasing and is highly concentrated in poorer countries with weaker governance. The exposure of people and assets to natural hazards is growing at a faster rate than risk-reducing capacities are being strengthened, leading to increasing disaster risk, particularly in low- and low-middle income countries experiencing rapid economic growth. The report finds that weather-related disaster risk is expanding rapidly in terms of the territories affected, the losses reported and the frequency of events. Underlying risk drivers such as poor urban governance, vulnerable rural livelihoods and ecosystem decline underpin the rapid expansion of weather-related disaster risk. The report notes that climate change is already changing the geographic distribution, frequency and intensity of weather-related hazards and threatens to undermine the ability of poorer countries and communities to absorb loss and recover from disaster impacts. This combination of increasing hazard and decreasing resilience makes climate change a global driver of disaster risk. The report also notes that resources and actions for disaster risk reduction are not reaching the most vulnerable local communities, a finding also reported by the Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction.

8. Rapid urbanization is exacerbating the vulnerability of urban dwellers, particularly the urban poor, to the impacts of disasters and climate change. More than 50 per cent of the world's population currently lives in urban areas and this figure is expected to rise to 60 per cent, or nearly 5 billion people, by 2030. Of this urban population, nearly 635 million people live in at-risk coastal areas. Poverty among urban populations further heightens their vulnerability. Natural disasters and the effects of climate change in urban areas affect the entire population of a country, owing to the dependence on urban economies as engines of national economic growth and to the effects of disasters on governance and, therefore, political stability. Because of their importance to nations as a whole, urban disaster responses require early recovery strategies implemented from the initial stage of relief operations. In March 2009, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee — the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination, policy development and decision-making relating to humanitarian assistance — established the Task Force on Humanitarian Action and Human Rights, the mandate of which is to develop a strategy to address the humanitarian consequences of urbanization.

9. While poor populations generally suffer the greatest losses during and after natural disasters, the effects of disasters also exacerbate existing gender inequalities and reinforce the disparity between women and men in terms of their vulnerability to disasters and a changing climate and their ability to cope with them. The majority of those who die as a result of natural disasters are women. Women often have less access to essential resources for disaster preparedness, mitigation and rehabilitation. In poor communities that are highly dependent on local natural resources for their livelihood, the responsibilities of women in the family make them more vulnerable to environmental change, which can be exacerbated by the effects of climate change. The contribution of women to disaster risk reduction has also been underestimated. Due to their traditional roles and relevant knowledge of the environment, the participation of women in decision-making is invaluable in developing disaster risk reduction strategies. The International Conference on Gender and Disaster Risk

Reduction, held in 2009 in Beijing, resulted in an increased understanding of the link between gender and disaster risk reduction.

10. Pre-existing vulnerabilities and patterns of discrimination are often exacerbated in post-disaster situations, as illustrated through a reported increase in human rights violations in disaster contexts. These violations include: gender-based violence (including sexual violence); violations of housing, land and property rights and personal documentation and status rights; discrimination in access to assistance and its distribution; and violations of the right to education and the right to access work and livelihoods in the aftermath of a disaster.

11. Globally, natural disasters are the greatest cause of internal displacement. Securing lasting, sustainable solutions for internally displaced persons in post-disaster situations is essential, whether those solutions involve return home, local integration or relocation. Lasting, durable solutions cannot be achieved unless certain prerequisites are met, including: a safe and secure environment; access to basic services; effective mechanisms to enable repair and rebuilding of damaged or destroyed housing and infrastructure or, when this is not possible, for compensation; and equal access to livelihood opportunities and public services.

III. Year in review (1 June 2008-31 May 2009)

A. Climate-related hazard events

1. Africa

12. The effects of natural hazards have continued to contribute to the complex humanitarian situation in the Horn of Africa. Recurrent drought jeopardizes the livelihoods of millions of people in rural and urban communities. Rainfall from October to December was below average across the region and almost non-existent in some parts of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. In other regions, torrential rains caused severe flooding and destroyed crops. In August, more than 40,000 people were displaced by floods in southern Sudan. In October and November, severe flooding and landslides in Kenya affected an estimated 300,000 people. The effects of continued drought and repeated floods have progressively eroded livelihoods and community coping mechanisms across the region.

13. In West Africa, flooding from July to September 2008 affected more than 300,000 people in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo, and caused widespread damage to crops and vital infrastructure. Seasonal rains also caused damage in Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

14. During early 2009, flooding affected many areas of southern Africa, including southern and central Angola, northern Namibia, most of Zambia, south-western Madagascar, northern Mozambique, northern and southern Malawi and northern Botswana. In Namibia, the flooding caused 92 deaths and affected approximately 750,000 people, including an estimated 54,000 displaced. The effects of the flooding persisted over several weeks and were exacerbated by high levels of vulnerability and the ongoing recovery from flooding in 2008. In March 2009, a flash appeal for $2.7 million was launched. The number of affected and displaced populations continued to rise, however, and the appeal was revised upward to $7.1 million in July 2009 on the basis of further assessments.

2. Asia and Oceania

15. Well-below normal rainfall and winter snowfall across most of Afghanistan during late 2007 and early 2008, leading to the worst drought conditions in the past 10 years. As a result, Afghanistan only harvested two thirds of its food requirement in 2008. In addition, it was among the first countries to feel the impact of the food price crisis. These factors significantly heightened food insecurity across the country. In response, the United Nations, the Government of Afghanistan and their non-governmental organization partners launched an emergency food and drought appeal for $404 million to cover the period from July 2008 to July 2009. As at May 2009, the appeal had raised $201 million (50 per cent of the requested amount). The winter season of 2009 was relatively mild and did not cause an emergency of the scale seen during the winter of 2008. From April to May 2009, severe floods in the northern, north-eastern and western regions of Afghanistan affected over 13,000 households.

16. Launched in January, the 2009 Humanitarian Action Plan for Afghanistan presents project proposals for a total of $604 million and aims to meet the immediate needs and build the resilience of those made most vulnerable by natural disasters, lack of access to basic social services, increasing food insecurity, the ongoing armed conflict and the worsening security situation.

17. Unusually heavy monsoon rains in 2008 caused severe flooding in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan, killing more than 1,500 and forcing several million from their homes across all four countries. In Nepal, the flooding of the Koshi River in August 2008 affected an estimated 70,000 people. The river subsequently changed course, causing massive flooding in downstream Bihar State in India (where the river is known as the Kosi) and displacing some 3 million people. Separately in India, flooding killed more than 1,000 and affected 2.3 million people in Uttar Pradesh; more than a million people were affected by floods in Assam and more than half a million people were displaced by flooding in Orissa. In central and northern Bangladesh, more than 975,000 people were affected by flooding in August and September. In Pakistan, flooding in September affected more than 200,000, mainly in North-West Frontier Province and neighbouring areas near the border with Afghanistan. In September, heavy rains caused floods and landslides in western regions of Nepal, displacing more than 180,000 people. Nepal also suffered one of the worst droughts on record during the winter of 2008-2009, which affected 1.5 million people. In November 2008, flooding affected over 300,000 people in northern Sri Lanka.

18. The Syrian Arab Republic is experiencing its worst drought in 40 years. Over 1 million people, predominantly herders and subsistence farmers, have suffered directly from the severe effects of the drought on their food security and livelihoods. In September 2008, five agencies of the United Nations launched an appeal for $20 million, of which $4 million was funded (19 per cent of the requested amount). In October 2008, floods and heavy rains affected eastern Yemen, resulting in one of the most serious disasters in the country in recent decades. At least 90 people were killed and 25,000 people displaced. A flash appeal for $11 million was launched, for which $5.1 million was raised (44 per cent of the requested amount).

19. In Indonesia, torrential rains between September and December 2008 caused numerous cases of flash flooding and landslides. At least 31,500 people were temporarily displaced. In December 2008, a combination of high tides and tropical

depressions caused unusually high seas, which affected the low-lying islands and coastal regions of Papua New Guinea. At its peak, an estimated 75,000 people were directly affected by the flooding. In January 2009, heavy rains caused severe flooding in the Northern, Central and Western Divisions of Fiji.

3. Americas

20. The 2008 Atlantic hurricane season was extremely active, with 16 named tropical storms, including eight hurricanes. It was also one of the most devastating, causing a huge number of casualties (855 direct casualties) and widespread destruction in the Caribbean, Central America and the United States.

21. In August and September 2008, four successive hurricanes and tropical storms hit Haiti, affecting more than 800,000 people and causing economic losses estimated at 15 per cent of gross domestic product. According to Government figures, the hurricanes and tropical storms Fay, Gustav, Hanna and Ike caused 793 deaths and injured 548 people. A flash appeal was launched for $127 million to undertake humanitarian and some early recovery activities within a six-month period. The appeal raised $69 million (55 per cent of the requested amount).

22. Between 16 August and 10 September, Cuba was hit by two tropical storms and two hurricanes, Ike and Gustav. The combined devastation resulting from these storms caused seven deaths and $10 billion in economic losses. More than 444,000 houses were damaged, leaving about 200,000 people homeless and hundreds of thousands more in badly damaged homes.

23. Honduras and Guatemala experienced an intense rainy season in 2008. In October, Honduras was affected by heavy rainfall, which caused flooding in 17 of the country's 18 departments. The flooding and related landslides killed 33 people and affected over 300,000. Crops and public infrastructure were also destroyed. A flash appeal was issued for $17 million, of which $6 million was funded. In Guatemala, floods killed three people and affected a further 180,000. In November 2008, Panama experienced flooding and landslides in many parts of the country, which caused 10 fatalities, affected 24,000 people and damaged or destroyed 3,300 homes. In late 2008, widespread flooding and landslides in Colombia affected more than 700,000 people.

B. Geological hazard events

24. On 5 October 2008, an earthquake measuring 6.6 on the Richter scale struck southern Kyrgyzstan, affecting approximately 1,200 people and killing 75. On 29 October 2008, an earthquake of magnitude 6.4 struck Balochistan Province in south-western Pakistan, affecting approximately 35,000 people, killing 166 and displacing approximately 7,000. In consultation with national authorities, the humanitarian community developed a response plan seeking a total of $19 million to provide immediate assistance over a period of six months, towards which $12.6 million was contributed. On 8 January 2009, an earthquake in the Alajuela province of Costa Rica claimed the lives of 15 people and displaced a further 3,700.

C. Epidemics

25. During the reporting period, outbreaks of disease continued to cause human suffering, disrupt the social and economic structure and impede development in affected communities. In Zimbabwe, 98,424 suspected cases of cholera, including 4,276 deaths, were reported between 1 August 2008 and 31 May 2009. In December 2008, humanitarian partners decided to launch an operational plan to allow for a predictable and coordinated response to the epidemic, requesting a total amount of $41 million. In Somalia a total of 94,650 cases of diarrhoeal diseases and 1,175 cases of measles were reported during the reporting period.

26. During the reporting period, the highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1 virus continued to claim lives in several countries, primarily in the Nile River basin and South-East Asia. However, there were fewer reports of outbreaks in animals and infections in humans, and fewer newly affected countries than in the previous two years. The lethality of the virus remained relatively stable at approximately 60 per cent, and there was no evidence of increased transmissibility from person to person.

27. In April 2009, Mexico experienced an outbreak of new influenza A(H1N1), which was subsequently declared a public health emergency of international concern by the World Health Organization. As at 31 May 2009, 62 countries had officially reported over 17,000 cases, including 115 deaths. Since the end of the reporting period, the virus has continued to spread and has affected people in more than 160 countries. Further spread, within affected countries and to new countries, is considered inevitable. Infection continues to cause a mild illness. However, there is concern that the new H1N1 virus could eventually mutate into a more virulent strain and cause a severe pandemic.

D. Environmental hazards

28. During the reporting period, the secondary environmental impacts of natural disasters, such as disaster waste and damage to critical infrastructure, continued to exacerbate humanitarian crises. For example, disaster waste hampered hurricane early recovery efforts in Haiti and other Caribbean islands. The United Nations system continued to work to ensure an effective humanitarian response to environmental emergencies, primarily through early identification and mitigation of potential environmental risks. When requested, specialized assistance was provided to affected countries. Secondary environmental risks are now more frequently identified at the onset of major natural disasters and environment-related concerns are increasingly incorporated as a cross-cutting issue into humanitarian response efforts. Industrialization, urbanization and the effects of climate change are likely to result in an increase in environmental emergencies, particularly in countries with limited capacity to prepare for disasters and respond to them.

E. Humanitarian financing for disasters associated with natural hazards

29. In 2008, donors provided over $1.3 billion for hazard-related disaster responses, according to the United Nations Financial Tracking Service, which

records all reported international humanitarian aid, including in-kind aid and private donations. This contribution represented an increase compared to the $800 million provided in 2007. Donations for hazard-related disaster responses in 2008 constituted approximately 11 per cent of total global humanitarian funding.

30. During the reporting period, the United Nations system and its partner organizations issued six flash appeals for hazard-related disasters, in Haiti, Honduras, Kyrgyzstan, Madagascar, Namibia and Yemen. As at 31 May 2009, a total of $106 million, or 54 per cent of the total requested amount of $194 million, had been raised. This amount includes allocations of $23 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund.

31. During the reporting period, the Central Emergency Response Fund allocated $84.2 million to projects related to natural disasters, roughly one third of the total allocation. This funding was used by humanitarian partners for immediate life-saving activities and interventions to improve access to affected populations. Financial resources from the Fund were used to jump-start humanitarian response to a wide array of crises. For example, through several allocations of rapid response funding, the Fund provided over $9 million to humanitarian actors in Haiti to mitigate the humanitarian crisis caused by the hurricanes. Nearly $7 million was also allocated to the hurricane response in Cuba. The Fund provided $2 million in quick emergency funding for the response to the Balochistan earthquake in Pakistan and $1.5 million each to relief efforts in both Honduras and Guatemala to enable an immediate humanitarian response to flooding in October. The largest single allocation from the Fund during the reporting period was $7.9 million to help prevent the spread of cholera in Zimbabwe.

IV. Key challenges

32. Despite the success of the humanitarian community in decreasing deaths due to disasters over the past 20 years, it is clear that disaster risk is increasing globally. Poor communities in the developing world are the hardest hit by the effects of increased disaster risk. Global challenges, including extreme poverty, the food crisis, the financial crisis, water and energy scarcity, forced displacement and migration, population growth, urbanization and pandemics are increasing the underlying vulnerability of many poor communities, reducing their resilience and making them more likely to require external support if a disaster strikes.

33. Global climate change is increasing hazard intensity and frequency, which amplify disaster risk. The effects of climate change, such as changes in global water availability, will also potentially create new kinds of challenges as countries struggle to adapt to the changing distribution of resources, and secondary effects such as forced displacement, migration and possible conflicts. Effectively addressing acute humanitarian needs that may increasingly result from a combination of multiple and compounding threats, rather than a specific event, will pose a growing challenge in coming years.

34. Humanitarian actors have a critical role to play in the global risk management and risk reduction system. They are already at the forefront of efforts to promote pre-emptive disaster risk reduction, and it is clear that early warning and preparedness systems will need to be further strengthened to cope with increasing global demand and make the most effective use of scarce resources. In addition, the

skills of the humanitarian community in managing traditional and new types of risks remain essential. For many of the world's most vulnerable populations, humanitarian assistance from national or international sources is the only insurance or social safety net available in the face of a major disaster.

35. Humanitarian actors are working to become more efficient and adjust their systems to respond to future challenges. This entails: (a) a shift towards a greater focus on the multi-hazard environment, in particular the risks from climate change; (b) a greater focus on disaster preparedness for an effective response; and (c) efforts to ensure an effective transition from relief to recovery, which reduces long-term dependence on external assistance and reduces future disaster risk. These key challenges are discussed further in subsequent sections of the present report.

36. Within this changing humanitarian landscape, developing national and local capacities for humanitarian action, in terms of emergency preparedness, response and recovery, is increasingly acknowledged as being fundamental to improving the overall delivery of humanitarian assistance. When communities are stronger and nations have improved capacity to address the needs of their populations in emergencies, demand for international assistance falls dramatically. Enhancing capacity at local and national levels must therefore be a priority in order to mitigate risks to populations and to ensure the effectiveness of disaster preparedness, risk reduction and initial response operations.

A. Addressing the implications of climate change in the humanitarian system

37. In its Fourth Assessment Report, endorsed by 194 Member States, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has confirmed that the geographic distribution, frequency and intensity of natural hazards are already being altered significantly by climate change. Changes are occurring in the amount, intensity and frequency of precipitation and are associated with increases in the extent of areas affected by drought, the number of heavy precipitation events that lead to flooding, and the intensity and duration of some types of tropical storms. These trends are predicted to accelerate. Through its effects on agricultural production and water security, climate change is also expected to lead to increased food insecurity, especially in areas where humanitarian actors work. The effects of climate change on displacement, migration and security are also of significant concern.

38. The effects of climate change will increase demands on the humanitarian system, particularly where vulnerability to disasters is already high. Adapting to these effects will require an integrated, multi-hazard risk management approach and significant scaling up and adjustment of humanitarian systems to ensure that Governments and communities are able to respond to more frequent extreme hazards and to the effects of food insecurity, displacement, migration and potential conflict. This will require an increased focus on prevention and preparedness and on national and local capacity-building, which will help reduce demand for an international response. In particular, there is an urgent need to scale up investment in disaster preparedness in high-risk settings. Early warning systems and vulnerability analyses are of particular importance and humanitarian actors will need to work in much closer partnership with development actors.

39. Climate change-related increases in hazard intensity and frequency are occurring in a world where the number of people affected by disasters has already tripled over the past decade. More than two thirds of the mortality and economic losses caused by internationally reported disasters are associated with climate-related hazards. In 2008, the United Nations humanitarian system issued 12 flash appeals. Ten of these were issued in response to an emergency resulting, at least in part, from extreme weather. In 2007, 14 out of 15 flash appeals were issued in response to extreme weather disasters. Analysis of current hotspots for climate-related hazards shows that they are concentrated in certain areas and that the poor are at a significantly higher risk.

40. An estimated 36 million people were displaced by sudden-onset natural disasters in 2008. Of those, over 20 million were displaced by climate-related disasters. Globally, the total number of newly internally displaced persons due to conflict and violence was approximately 4.6 million during that year. There are no reliable estimates of the magnitude of future population flows as a result of climate change, but the most commonly cited estimates indicate that between 50 and 200 million people may move by 2050, either within their own countries or across borders, on a permanent or temporary basis. Responding to the humanitarian and protection needs of people moving as a result of climate-related events and processes is therefore of particular importance. There is a clear and pressing need to address the remaining gaps in existing legal frameworks, in particular for those forced to cross a border, and in the areas of research and analysis, policy and operational capacity.

41. During the reporting period, humanitarian actors increased efforts to understand and adapt to the effects of climate change on humanitarian operations in three main respects. Firstly, they began to examine how existing operations could be made more effective in the face of increasing demand, determining that this goal could be achieved through better use of climate change science and technological innovations, and by strengthening preparedness and early warning systems. Secondly, they began to integrate protection considerations when looking at how the effects of climate change, particularly increased forced displacement and migration related to climate change, could be managed by existing global legal frameworks and norms. Thirdly, they engaged in the intergovernmental negotiation process towards a new global climate change agreement to replace the Kyoto Protocol when it expires in 2012. The negotiations are expected to culminate in an agreement at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December 2009.

42. In June 2008, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee established an informal task force on climate change to support humanitarian organizations in the development of policies and operations at the local, regional and national levels and to provide high-quality inputs into negotiations of a future global climate change agreement. In 2009, the task force organized an initial round of inter-agency consultations at the national and regional levels to identify the humanitarian impacts of climate change and to discuss approaches, best practices and challenges in addressing them. The key needs identified were: (a) to promote wider recognition of the human face of climate change; (b) to improve understanding of climate change and associated humanitarian impacts; (c) to recognize humanitarian action as a key component of climate change adaptation; (d) to scale up and strengthen existing preparedness activities in order to respond to the increasing number and intensity of

sudden- and slow-onset disasters; and (e) to improve linkages and coordinate activities between humanitarian, development and other climate change actors.

43. A new global climate change agreement offers an unprecedented opportunity to improve the global risk management system in highly vulnerable settings. Conversely, developing a parallel system to manage extreme climate events could potentially fragment or cause confusion in the current system, or even divert resources from the existing disaster management mechanisms that support humanitarian operations. During the reporting period, humanitarian actors have advocated a robust climate change adaptation framework that gives priority to the most vulnerable. Through technical submissions to the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and advocacy activities, humanitarian actors have emphasized that a new global climate change adaptation framework should: (a) recognize the necessity of disaster risk reduction strategies and risk management mechanisms as a first line of defence against the effects of climate change and to fast-track action on adaptation; (b) build upon existing strategies and mechanisms for disaster risk reduction and risk management; (c) take account of, and manage, the humanitarian consequences of climate change and protect human security through the systematic reduction of disaster risks and strengthening of emergency preparedness, response and recovery mechanisms at all levels; (d) ensure that substantial and additional human and financial resources are available for disaster risk reduction and risk management and that the criteria for funding are fully consistent with the principles of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters; and (e) take account of, and manage, the consequences of forced displacement and migration that may occur in the context of climate change.

B. Strengthening disaster preparedness for an effective response

44. Investing in preparedness lowers the potential economic and human losses that disasters can cause and decreases the time required to mount an effective life-saving response. Investments in preparedness will be particularly important in the context of the increasing frequency and intensity of climate-related hazards. Effective disaster preparedness includes establishing institutional arrangements in advance, maintaining effective early warning, information management and contingency planning systems, and stockpiling equipment and supplies. Strengthening emergency services and standby arrangements, allocating sufficient resources and funding, establishing communications and coordination arrangements and providing training and public education involving women and men equally are also important. Building local and national capacity, as well as fostering regional and international cooperation, are essential for further strengthening preparedness.

45. The experience of hurricanes Gustav and Ike, which hit Cuba in August 2008, provide an example of how effective preparedness measures can protect lives and livelihoods. Gustav was regarded as the most severe hurricane to strike the island in the past 50 years. Ike was less strong but crossed the entire country, prompting authorities to evacuate more than 3 million people to shelters or higher ground. As a result of such mitigation measures, only seven lives were lost during the hurricane season, despite its severity.

46. Priority five of the Hyogo Framework for Action advocates strengthening disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels and highlights the essential role that preparedness can play in saving lives and livelihoods, particularly when integrated into an overall disaster risk reduction approach. Consistent with its obligations under the Framework, the humanitarian community has continued its preparedness work, primarily to strengthen the response capacity of international stakeholders at global, regional and national levels, and of national authorities. Humanitarian actors have also stepped up efforts to harness global communications and information management systems for disaster preparedness and to strengthen pandemic preparedness.

1. Strengthening the response capacity of Governments and international stakeholders at global, regional and national levels

47. During the reporting period, a number of key steps were taken to strengthen disaster preparedness. The Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative, established in 2007, continued to provide capacity enhancement services to Governments and the United Nations system, supporting capacity development in two countries (Mozambique and Uganda) and in South-Eastern Europe (12 countries). The Initiative also developed several participatory training materials and supported disaster risk reduction training for more than 100 senior United Nations staff, and contributed to the dissemination of the newly approved disaster risk reduction guidelines for common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

48. The United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination system continued to work with Member States to enhance their preparedness and response capacity. During the reporting period, six preparedness missions were deployed to Bhutan, Cambodia, Honduras, Uganda, Papua New Guinea and Peru. The missions were deployed to directly assist Governments in evaluating their national disaster response preparedness plans and make recommendations for improvement. In addition, nine missions were deployed in response to disasters in Haiti, Honduras, Namibia, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Nepal, the United Republic of Tanzania, the Turks and Caicos Islands and Yemen.

49. During the reporting period, the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group, a global network of urban search and rescue providers that sets global standards for earthquake response, formally evaluated and classified four international urban search and rescue teams from Australia, Poland, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Three awareness training courses, organized by the Advisory Group and the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination system, were held in Croatia, the Russian Federation and the United Arab Emirates to familiarize national emergency managers in disaster-prone regions with the international humanitarian response system for sudden-onset disasters.

50. Humanitarian agencies continued to assist Member States in the implementation of priority five of the Hyogo Framework for Action (disaster preparedness for effective response). During the reporting period, assistance was given to Azerbaijan, Cambodia, the Comoros, Ghana, Indonesia, Mali, Mexico, Nepal, Nicaragua, Peru, Senegal, Togo and Uganda. Humanitarian agencies have also worked to promote the guidance and indicator package for implementing

priority five. The guidance supports Member States, civil society, regional organizations and international actors to strengthen their in-country preparedness capacity.

51. Through the provision of training and sharing of best practices, humanitarian agencies have worked to increase dissemination, understanding and implementation of the revised Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Guidelines for Humanitarian Assistance, which present recommendations on how to establish and implement a coordinated, inter-agency contingency planning process, develop integrated plans and monitor ongoing preparedness actions. During the reporting period, 53 countries developed or updated their inter-agency contingency plans for specific scenarios or multiple-hazard emergencies. In addition, an inter-agency emergency simulation package, developed in early 2008, was piloted in five countries during the reporting period and has now been launched for global use.

52. Humanitarian agencies continued to contribute to common risk analysis through production of the quarterly report Early Warning Early Action, which aims to foster enhanced preparedness and early humanitarian response. Key humanitarian actors also met through the Emergency Directors Meeting, a network for identifying and following up on preparedness actions for major and potential humanitarian emergencies, which held several formal and ad hoc meetings during the reporting period. Recommendations relating to operational strategy and policy arising from this forum have enhanced the quality of humanitarian response, for example, in Afghanistan, the Philippines, Somalia, the Sudan and Yemen, among others.

53. Protecting affected populations, particularly the most vulnerable groups, in situations of natural disasters remained a priority for humanitarian actors. Protection involves a wide range of activities that are aimed at ensuring respect for the rights of all individuals. During the reporting period, the global protection cluster working group continued to provide technical guidance and support to humanitarian country teams and resident/humanitarian coordinators to bring protection concerns into the mainstream of disaster management and contingency planning. Based on the Operational Guidelines on Human Rights and Natural Disasters (A/HRC/4/38/Add.1, annex), adopted by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, workshops on the application of a rights-based approach in emergency preparedness and response were held in Madagascar, Mozambique, Panama and South Africa. The Working Group continued to revise the accompanying manual to the Guidelines, based on consultations with field-based practitioners. Training on protection in natural disasters was provided to the Senior Protection Officers of the Protection Standby Capacity Project, two of whom were deployed to Haiti and Myanmar. The Working Group also undertook support missions to these two States. The Working Group also worked to support the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons to integrate human rights principles and protection standards into disaster preparedness, response, recovery and reconstruction.

54. The revised terms of reference for humanitarian coordinators and the job description of resident coordinators, which were endorsed in 2009, place significant emphasis on the role of resident and humanitarian coordinators in preparedness. This includes supporting the host Government to implement preparedness measures, in addition to leading and coordinating the preparedness efforts of country teams and other humanitarian actors in support of national efforts. However, in order to be

able to perform these functions effectively, resident/humanitarian coordinators require additional capacity.

55. The United Nations system and its partners are increasingly equipped and able to provide rapid short-term support for new emergencies, and in the case of large-scale disasters, to establish robust humanitarian operations that may last for a year or more. However, a challenge remains in being able to quickly deploy skilled and experienced humanitarian personnel — including those to lead coordination efforts — who are able to deploy at the outset of small to mid-scale emergencies and remain for periods of three to six months. This time frame is not well catered for in current surge capacity mechanisms.

56. During the reporting period, humanitarian organizations and their partners began to bring the Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance into the mainstream of legal development and disaster management and risk reduction initiatives. The Guidelines are designed to assist Governments in preparing their legal and institutional arrangements for international disaster assistance. Specific advice or training was provided in Cambodia, Kenya, Laos, Malaysia, Nigeria, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Sierra Leone and Viet Nam. In addition, humanitarian agencies supported a process driven by Member States in the Central Asia region to enhance legal preparedness for regional collaboration in the event of emergencies. The United Nations system continued to promote the conclusion of the Model Customs Facilitation Agreement between the United Nations and recipient countries of, or transit countries for disaster relief assistance.

57. Through the World Disaster Reduction Campaign on Hospitals Safe from Disasters, humanitarian actors and their partners worked to advocate the need to protect health facilities and ensure that they can function during, and in the aftermath of disasters. Regional frameworks were established and a number of countries are developing Safe Hospital programmes, which will enable a more effective health response to disasters. World Health Day was also devoted to the theme of making health facilities safe in emergencies.

2. Improved global communications and information management for disaster preparedness

58. Harnessing improvements in communications technology and information management to support preparedness for an effective response is critical. During the reporting period, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Sub-Working Group on Emergency Telecommunications continued to promote the adoption of emergency telecommunications standards, as well as the development of bilateral agreements among humanitarian organizations and partnerships with the private sector to improve emergency telecommunications preparedness.

59. Efforts continued to promote the Tampere Convention on the Provision of Telecommunication Resources for Disaster Mitigation and Relief Operations. With the addition of Armenia, Colombia and Pakistan in 2008, 40 States have now ratified the Convention.

60. Applying the latest technological advances in areas of remote sensing, mapping and satellite imagery has proved invaluable for humanitarian actors. During the reporting period, the United Nations Platform for Space-based

Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response continued its efforts to ensure access to, and use of all types of space-based information to support the full disaster management cycle.

61. Following the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 62/92, an independent and external review was carried out in order to assess the value added of and user satisfaction with the Central Register of Disaster Management Capacities. The eight directories of the Register were created in 1992 following resolution 46/182 of the General Assembly to "establish a Central Register of all specialized personnel and teams of technical specialists, as well as relief supplies, equipment and services available within the United Nations system and from Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations that can be called upon at short notice by the United Nations". The review found that the directories of the Register currently have limited value added for the United Nations and the broader humanitarian emergency assistance community. Designed 17 years ago and, in some cases, overtaken by subsequent systems and networks, the directories are generally little known and have a low level of usage, and most have not reached potential users as intended. According to the review, in the past two years, the directories of the Register have not played a significant role in emergency response processes and for those who have used the directories, satisfaction has been mostly low. The review recommends that the future of each of the eight directories of the Register be reconsidered. In particular, the review proposes to re-examine the need for five of the eight directories in their current format.

3. Strengthening pandemic preparedness

62. Humanitarian actors are continuing to prepare themselves and support Member States to respond to a severe pandemic, which could have significant humanitarian impacts, in particular in developing countries. United Nations country teams and humanitarian agencies continued to revise and test their business continuity plans and pandemic contingency plans. During the reporting period, humanitarian agencies provided pandemic planning support to 90 United Nations country teams and conducted 44 simulation exercises for country teams, national Governments, inter-agency headquarters groups and regional actors to increase awareness of the pandemic threat and revitalize planning processes. Senior managers from the United Nations system, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and humanitarian partners undertook a high-level simulation exercise to understand how they would coordinate and divide their work during a pandemic. Since the emergence of new influenza A(H1N1), United Nations country teams and other key parts of the United Nations system have refreshed their plans and have begun implementing crucial preparedness measures in cooperation with national authorities and operational partners from the humanitarian community. Many national authorities have also developed and implemented national strategies to plan for pandemic influenza.

C. Strengthening the transition from relief to development

63. Managing the transition from relief to development is a critical concern in post-disaster settings. Experience increasingly shows that, if adequately managed, the post-disaster recovery phase provides an important opportunity to reduce vulnerability and long-term reliance on humanitarian assistance. The early recovery

efforts of the United Nations system aim to generate self-sustaining, nationally owned, resilient processes to support the restoration of basic services and primary infrastructure, livelihoods, shelter, governance, security and rule of law and the environment. They also promote durable, rights-based solutions for displaced populations and actions to reduce future disaster risk. Managing the transition from relief to development requires effective coordination and leadership to: identify lingering gaps and vulnerabilities; align resource requirements and uses; and ensure overall operational coherence among actors across, and activities throughout, all phases of the assistance effort. Where disasters occur in settings of ongoing, recent or potential conflict, the promotion of social cohesion should be incorporated into early recovery assistance.

Efforts to strengthen the transition from relief to recovery

64. During the reporting period, a number of key steps were taken at the global level to strengthen the transition from relief to development. The joint United Nations Development Group and Executive Committee on Humanitarian Assistance Working Group on Transition Issues worked to strengthen planning, coordination and funding for transition in order to support a stronger, more coherent United Nations system response in assisting national recovery efforts. The activities of the Working Group included developing guidance and tools for use in the field and overall transition architecture, and ensuring adequate capacity for country support, financing for transition and the transfer of humanitarian information systems to national entities.

65. The Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery, with a membership of 30 organizations, is mandated to lead efforts to support a coordinated early recovery response in both natural disasters and conflict situations and their aftermath. During the reporting period, the Working Group provided support in post-disaster situations to nine early recovery clusters and networks at the country level. For example, following Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar, an inter-agency early recovery network was quickly established, enabling the deployment of additional technical support for the Post-Nargis Joint Needs Assessment. This resulted in revision of the flash appeal for Myanmar to include a strong early recovery element and formed the basis of the current early recovery strategic framework.

66. During the reporting period, 17 early recovery experts were deployed from surge capacity rosters to 13 countries in post-disaster contexts, in addition to the considerable number of staff deployments by the members of the Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery. Support included advice on establishing and running early recovery coordination mechanisms; additional capacity and expertise to plan and implement post-disaster needs assessments; support for early recovery strategic planning that builds on humanitarian assistance and links to longer-term recovery planning processes; dissemination and application of new guidance and tools on early recovery; additional capacity and advice on information management to support a coordinated early recovery response; design of monitoring and evaluation frameworks for early recovery efforts; and support for early recovery resource mobilization. In addition, the Working Group developed and disseminated a number of specific tools and resources to strengthen early recovery at the field level. Further strengthening of these systems is essential.

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67. The post-disaster needs assessment is a joint assessment that brings together the physical, economic and human development aspects of recovery assessment. Post-disaster needs assessments were carried out in several post-disaster contexts during the reporting period, including in Myanmar (July 2008), Haiti (November 2008) and Namibia (May 2009). In each case, the assessment resulted in a comprehensive recovery framework, which included priorities to guide the recovery effort from the immediate aftermath of the crisis to longer-term recovery. Despite these successes, several challenges remain, including a lack of common understanding on methodological issues among field staff and inadequate harmonization between existing methodologies. These challenges are being addressed through the establishment of an information platform to support the assessment process and through training of field staff.

68. Although the United Nations system is working to strengthen its efforts in support of national governments in transition settings, effective transition can be hampered by a lack of coherent planning, limited capacity on the part of national and international actors for recovery programming and capacity development, and inadequate or delayed funding. National capacity for early recovery remains uneven and can be significantly depleted as a result of a disaster. Further efforts are needed to support integrated inter-agency needs and capacity assessments in post-disaster contexts, with a focus on early recovery and linkages to long-term recovery and reconstruction, and to ensure that early efforts are made to resuscitate the capacity of Government to manage the recovery effort.

69. Resident/humanitarian coordinators have a key role in leading United Nations system efforts to support Governments in early recovery and in ensuring that appropriate linkages are made between relief, recovery, transition and development activities at the country level. According to a recent evaluation, however, additional human and financial resources are required to support the work of resident/humanitarian coordinators, which includes the assessment, coordination, planning, and initiation of early recovery programming. This capacity needs to be deployed earlier and more comprehensively than is currently the case.

70. Early recovery planning is not always included in national and local disaster preparedness planning. Early recovery strategies and programmes need to be developed using integrated assessments that are based on a sound analysis of the gaps, risk dynamics and national and local capacities.

71. Early recovery is consistently underfunded through both humanitarian and development funding instruments. No formal, predictable inter-agency mechanisms to mobilize resources for transition programmes currently exist. Humanitarian funding instruments focus predominantly on immediate life-saving interventions, whereas development funding focuses on promoting sustained, long-term socio-economic benefits, and as a result, funding for transition is often overlooked. When early recovery is not funded in the humanitarian phase, funding gaps occur in the period during which humanitarian funding is phased out and before development funds can be accessed and mobilized.

V. Recommendations

72. Member States are encouraged to underline the importance of early and multi-year commitments to the Central Emergency Response Fund and other humanitarian

financing mechanisms, both United Nations and non-United Nations mechanisms, in order to ensure predictable and timely access to resources for humanitarian emergencies resulting from disasters associated with natural hazards.

73. Member States, the United Nations system and other humanitarian actors are called upon to accelerate the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action and to place a strong emphasis on the promotion and strengthening of disaster preparedness activities at all levels, in particular in the most vulnerable communities. Member States are encouraged to increase funding for disaster risk reduction activities, including disaster preparedness.

74. Member States are encouraged to strengthen support for humanitarian actors to enable them to cope with the increasing humanitarian burden associated with climate change, and to give priority to efforts in the most vulnerable settings.

75. Member States are encouraged to review and revise current pandemic response plans, as well as to take necessary preparedness measures and other actions to respond to pandemic influenza, including engaging in cross-border pandemic preparedness planning with neighbouring countries.

76. The United Nations system and other humanitarian actors are encouraged to further strengthen the ability to quickly and flexibly deploy humanitarian professionals to support Governments and country teams in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, taking particular account of the period of three to six months, for which current mechanisms are limited.

77. The United Nations system and other humanitarian actors are urged to significantly increase the level of human and financial resources provided to humanitarian and resident coordinators for leading and coordinating disaster preparedness and early recovery activities.

78. Member States are encouraged to increase their legal preparedness for effective disaster management by using the Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance and also to consider signing the Model Customs Facilitation Agreement to facilitate the import and transit of relief consignments and possessions of relief personnel in the event of disasters and other emergencies.

79. The United Nations system and other humanitarian actors are called upon to integrate early recovery into their work across all sectors and thematic areas, and to improve the dissemination and application of tools and services for early recovery activities. Member States are encouraged to provide timely, flexible and predictable funding for early recovery, including through established humanitarian funding instruments, and to ensure that early recovery is included in disaster preparedness planning.

80. Member States and the United Nations system are encouraged to support initiatives that address the different impacts of natural disasters on individuals and groups, including through the collection and analysis of data disaggregated by gender, age and other relevant factors.

81. Member States are encouraged to consider the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Operational Guidelines on Human Rights and Natural Disasters in the implementation of contingency planning, disaster preparedness and response, as well as early recovery and durable solutions, and to work together by studying the

experiences of disaster-prone countries and regions to reduce the scale, duration and impact of internal displacement in the event of natural disasters.

82. Member States, the United Nations system and humanitarian actors are encouraged to consider the unique consequences of natural disasters in urban areas and, in particular, with regard to disaster risk reduction, preparedness and early recovery strategies.